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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 85: Effects of atomic radiation (*continued*) (A/56/46, A/C.4/56/L.5; United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation 2001 report to the General Assembly, with scientific annex (Hereditary effects of radiation))

1. **Mr. Kasemsarn** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, since its inception, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had vigorously conducted research and analysis on the effects and risks of atomic radiation for mankind and the environment. Its valuable contribution had deepened international awareness of the enormous risks of exposure to atomic radiation from both natural and man-made sources.

2. ASEAN welcomed the Scientific Committee's report and its annex on the hereditary effects of radiation. However, in order to fulfil its noble tasks and responsibilities, the Scientific Committee needed the support of all Member States and of other United Nations bodies, as well as international organizations.

3. The proper and safe usage of nuclear energy could be one of the options for generating power for production and national development of some countries. Along with the socio-economic benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, however, there were huge risks to the health and quality of life of people and the environment. The nuclear catastrophes of the recent past bore evidence of that. A balance therefore needed to be struck between using cheap alternate sources of energy on the one hand and protecting the health of peoples and the environment on the other. Now, more than ever, it was important for developed countries to extend assistance to developing countries, particularly through technology transfer, for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in a safe and sustainable manner.

4. It was also crucial that greater efforts should be made at all levels to conform with the internationally accepted safety standards or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in all matters relating to the use and handling of radioactive materials.

5. The ASEAN member countries called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In the light of the recent terrorist activities, every precaution must be taken to prevent nuclear technology and materials from falling into the wrong hands.

6. ASEAN reiterated its call to all nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

7. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) expressed appreciation to the Scientific Committee for its report and noted the high quality of its publications, which served as a basis for the work of international, regional and national bodies in the area of the protection of the population from the effects of atomic radiation. The comprehensive study on the topic "Hereditary effects of radiation" was also of very high quality.

8. Bearing in mind the variety of the effects of atomic radiation and the dangers associated with the use of atomic energy, research must be continued in that area and protective measures must be taken. In that connection, Egypt welcomed the programme of work adopted by the Scientific Committee at its fiftieth session. Since the use of atomic energy could have significant advantages in the most varied spheres, developing countries must be given access to nuclear technologies without preconditions or restrictions. At the same time, in the context of Egypt's urgent appeals for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, his delegation drew attention to the threat to the security of Egypt and neighbouring countries deriving from the Israeli nuclear reactor. Israel continued to refuse to place that reactor under international control.

9. Egypt was once again sponsoring the draft resolution on the item under consideration and hoped that it would be supported by all delegations.

10. **Mr. Paolillo** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, noted the important and growing role of nuclear energy in agriculture, industry and medicine, particularly in the developing countries. At the same time, though, it was impossible to overlook the enormous danger radiation sources represented for the planet and all its inhabitants. In that connection, it was necessary to mention that in the area of atomic energy States bore collective responsibility not only for

the transfer of resources but also for the exchange of all information on the effects of atomic radiation.

11. He noted with satisfaction the objective approach of the Scientific Committee towards its research work as well as its new initiatives in the area of revealing and evaluating sources of radiation. The high degree of professionalism of members of the Committee confirmed the conclusions set out in its report, particularly with regard to the hereditary risks of radiation exposure and the risk of multifactorial diseases. Once again that testified to the importance of having objective and independent analytical data on atomic radiation and its effect on the gene pool and the environment. The member countries of MERCOSUR supported all initiatives that had been taken to assess possible risks and to improve existing mechanisms of regulation and protection.

12. The members of MERCOSUR and the associated countries reaffirmed their steadfast resolve to continue using atomic energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. That policy, along with the declaration of the South Atlantic as a zone of peace, was directed towards achieving the main aim of the countries of the region, which consisted of improving the socio-economic situation of their peoples, as was demonstrated by the fact that the member countries of MERCOSUR had signed numerous international agreements on the exchange of nuclear materials and technologies.

13. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), noting that the threat related to nuclear weapons had grown in recent years, said that it was increasingly urgent to seek new ways of combating the danger, including on the basis of continuing research, exchanging information and strengthening the safeguards regime. In that connection, it had to be emphasized that the peaceful use of nuclear energy could bring mankind enormous benefits, particularly in medicine, industry and agriculture, in the interests of raising people's standard of living, especially in the developing countries.

14. Significant progress had been made in recent years as a result of the Scientific Committee's efforts in studying the effects of radiation and assessing its risks. His delegation had studied with great interest the current report of the Scientific Committee and appealed for the development of effective cooperation with that Committee and among interested agencies of the United Nations system. Dealing with nuclear radiation was all the more effective when all the measures agreed on a multilateral and non-discriminatory basis were implemented in strict compliance with IAEA safeguards.

15. His delegation called on the agencies of the United Nations system to make it a priority in their work plans to give developing countries technical assistance in overcoming the difficulties which hindered their acquisition of the necessary technology for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and thereby to support the general development process and narrow the gap between the countries of the North and those of the South.

16. Basing its policy on the need to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes, the Syrian Arab Republic had acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Regime. It favoured the strengthening of that safeguards regime, with a view to increasing its effectiveness, and had supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. However, that particular equation would remain unbalanced in the region while Israel remained the only country to possess a large-scale nuclear arsenal and be outside the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the safeguards regime.

17. Israel unwaveringly threatened the use of nuclear weapons, flouted the will of the international community and imposed its policies on other countries. That destabilized conditions in the region, which in turn gave rise to terror in view of the particularly complicated situation in the Middle East.

18. Reports were leaking out through the international mass media that there were problems in Israeli nuclear plants, among them the filtration of radioactive wastes the leakage of which could lead to the pollution of neighbouring regions and countries. That represented a real threat, and the international community had to exert pressure on Israel to ensure that it placed all its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards.

19. Turning to cooperation with agencies of the United Nations system, he said that a nine-week Arabic-language seminar had been held during the past year in Damascus. Such cooperation would promote the strengthening of a culture of preventive measures.

20. The Syrian Arab Republic called for the complete liquidation of nuclear arsenals, which would enable the

danger of atomic radiation to be reduced to a minimum. Underestimating the consequences of atomic radiation was a risk everyone ran, and it was essential to find solutions that would enable mankind to be saved from that deadly risk. That was possible only within the framework of international cooperation based on goodwill and carried out with determination and sincerity.

21. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) expressed gratitude to the Chairman of the Scientific Committee for his report and said that the reports of the Scientific Committee were widely respected and used to develop scientific standards.

22. His delegation welcomed the Scientific Committee's 2001 report on the hereditary effects of radiation. The Scientific Committee's conclusion that radiation exposure had no hereditary effects on human beings was quite convincing. However, in the light of developments in molecular biology and other sciences, it might be advisable to revisit the issue at a later date to explore some of the remaining uncertainties.

23. In addition, his delegation welcomed the programme of work which the Scientific Committee had adopted in April 2001 and noted in particular that Committee's intention to continue to study the health effects of the Chernobyl accident, as well as its close cooperation with scientists from Member States affected by that event.

24. Pakistan would continue to cooperate fully with the Scientific Committee in order to achieve the international community's collective goal of minimizing the effects of atomic radiation on mankind and the environment.

25. **Mr. Suanes** (Cuba) said that, for many years, the Scientific Committee had provided Member States with valuable information on the sources of atomic radiation and the effects of radiation on human beings and the environment.

26. The high scientific level of the reports of the Scientific Committee made them useful background documents for the adoption of national and international standards to protect populations against the effects of atomic radiation.

27. His delegation attached great importance to the Scientific Committee's work as a source of balanced and objective expertise in that field.

28. The Scientific Committee's report included, for the first time, a sufficiently full examination of the risks related to the hereditary effects of atomic radiation, namely diseases with both hereditary and environmental components.

29. His delegation stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation between the Scientific Committee and other organs and agencies of the United Nations system, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), IAEA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

30. The potential danger of atomic radiation could be eliminated only through comprehensive international cooperation on the peaceful use of atomic energy.

31. **Mr. Ouattara** (Burkina Faso) said it was gratifying that an item on activities in relation to atomic radiation had been included in the agenda. His delegation was also pleased that the Scientific Committee had submitted, at the current session, a report and a scientific annex on the hereditary effects of radiation, which undoubtedly would constitute a valuable tool for the international scientific community and for the entire world population.

32. His delegation attached great importance to the work of the Scientific Committee, which played a major role in international standard-setting for the purpose of protecting populations against the adverse effects of atomic radiation. It welcomed Ukraine's decision to close the Chernobyl nuclear plant permanently. As an advocate of the cessation of nuclear testing, it called once again for efforts to ensure that, in the new millennium, nuclear energy was used exclusively for the purposes of development and social progress. While it welcomed the Scientific Committee's close cooperation with various international, regional and subregional organizations, it called for increased cooperation between the Scientific Committee and Governments.

33. His delegation noted that the most important items in the Scientific Committee's new programme of work were the collection of new data on radiation exposures from natural, man-made and occupational sources, the extension of its evaluation of medical exposures and a comprehensive assessment of radon in homes and workplaces. His delegation reaffirmed its confidence in the Scientific Committee and stressed the importance of the latter's autonomy and independence.

34. **The Chairman** announced that Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and San Marino had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.5.

35. **Mr. Blazey** (Australia), **Mr. Popov** (Belarus), **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) and **Mr. Datsenko** (Ukraine) said that their delegations also wished to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

36. **The Chairman** said that, as the draft resolution had no programme budget implications, he took it that the Committee wished to adopt it without a vote.

37. *It was so decided.*

38. **Mr. Benzioni** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the concern expressed by the delegations of neighbouring countries, assured them that Israel, in its activities, always emphasized strict compliance with safety standards, especially with regard to nuclear reactors. The observance of the relevant safety requirements was closely monitored by both internal and external bodies, independent agencies, government entities and parliamentary committees. The other issues raised should be dealt with in the First Committee.

39. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) said that, while he welcomed the Israeli delegation's assurance that its nuclear facilities were secure and that they were covered by the strictest internal safeguards, he was concerned primarily about the fact that international inspection of those facilities was not allowed and that they were not covered by IAEA safeguards.

40. He agreed that the Committee must not encroach on the First Committee's area of competence. However, he urged Israel to examine closely the resolutions of the First Committee, the IAEA General Conference and the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to comply with the relevant decisions contained in those resolutions, which had been adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.